DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 377 700 FL 022 664

AUTHOR Benson, Phil
TITLE The Political Vocabulary of Hong Kong English.
PUB DATE Sep 94
NOTE 20p.; For complete volume, see FL 022 657.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)
JOURNAL CIT Hong Kong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching; n17 p63-81 Sep 1994

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Colonialism; Discourse Analysis; *English; Foreign Countries; Ideology; Journalism; Language Patterns; *Language Role; Language Usage; *Language Variation; Metaphors; *Newspapers; *News Writing; Nouns; *Political Influences; Regional Dialects; Vocabulary
IDENTIFIERS *Hong Kong

ABSTRACT

A study analyzed patterns of usage of political vocabulary in Hong Kong English as found in newspaper reports of a leading Hong Kong English-medium newspaper and two other English-medium newspapers. Data were drawn from a computerized corpus and a clippings file. The report begins with an overview of the theoretical basis of the study of ideology in the lexicon of English as a world language. The second section discusses Hong Kong's sociopolitical situation and some themes in official political discourse. Finally, the processes through which some of these themes are embedded in Hong Kong English are examined. Eight categories of vocabulary that exemplify two processes in the transformation of ideology into lexis (naming and metaphor) are identified: nominalization; naming by analogy; "hollow" or neutral names that conceal a document or institution's real function; re-lexicalization, or giving a new name when it is claimed a new concept is at issue; mythical actors (e.g., "average man"); fixed collocations; intertextual reference; and strategies used to dissociate the writer from his text. It is concluded that the vocabulary used does not accurately reflect cultural and linguistic norms of the indigenous population, but is closely related to colonial ideologies. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

The Political Vocabulary of Hong Kong English

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
fok chan
Yuen Yuen
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

Phil Benson

The English Centre, The University of Hong Kong

ED 377 700

This paper analyses tendencies within the political vocabulary of Hong Kong English. The discussion is based on data from a computer corpus of newspaper reports from one of Hong Kong's leading English-medium newspapers. Implications for the description of varieties of English around the world in terms of ideological variation are explored.

Introduction

The changes involved in Hong Kong's transition from British colonial rule to Chinese sovereignty have generated a rich political vocabulary in the English of Hong Kong (Taylor, 1989; Davies & Roberts, 1990, Benson 1993) that has barely been touched upon in studies of Hong Kong English as a potential variety of world English (Luke & Richards, 1982; Platt, 1982; Newbrook, 1988; Bolton & Kwok, 1990). The aim of this paper is to describe and account for this vocabulary in terms of a theoretical framework in which lexical variation is related to ideological variation.

The data for the study comes from two sources: a one million word electronic corpus of Hong Kong news reports published in the *South China Morning Post* during 1992 and early-1993[1] and a file of clippings from more recent editions of Hong Kong's three daily English-medium newspapers, the *South China Morning Post*, *Hongkong Standard* and *Eastern Express*. Distinctive lexical features from this data are explained in terms of a dominant ideology of 'colonialism in transition' constituted within official and public discourse in Hong Kong. One of the major concerns of the study is to show how certain themes within this discourse are embedded at the level of the vocabulary and how a relatively small number of vocabulary items can work to sustain a discourse and the interests on which it is based.

The paper reports on one part of a broader study on the lexicography of Asian varieties of English that attempts to apply theoretical insights from critical language studies to the lexicon of English as a world language. One of the conclusions of this study is that lexical variation in world English is related to ideological variation at several levels. This part of the study focuses on public written discourse. It does not deal with variation in the spoken English of non-native speakers in Hong Kong, which would be a usual concern of studies in the field of World Englishes. This reflects a view that investigations of English in multilingual settings should treat the public discourse of printed and broadcast media and the private discourse of non-native speakers of English separately in order to determine their mutual influences. In analysing private discourse we would need to look more closely at the notion of 'ideologies of resistance' as well as the influence of public discourse. In other settings we might also want to look at post-colonial ideologies and more public ideologies of resistance. In this paper, however, the focus is exclusively on ideologies of colonialism as they are constituted in public discourse in Hong Kong. This focus reflects both the sociopolitical situation of Hong Kong and the roles and functions of English within it.

[1] This corpus is called the *Hong Kong South China Morning Post Corpus*. It has been compiled by the author with Joseph Leung, and is distributed with the agreement of the *South China Morning Post*. The corpus can be obtained from the author or by electronic mail from the Oxford Text Archive.

FL022604

BEST COPY AVAILABLE 2

The paper is divided into three main sections. The first outlines the theoretical basis of the study in the field of critical language studies and its application to the lexicon of English as a world language. The second section discusses relevant features of the sociopolitical situation in Hong Kong and outlines some of the themes in official discourse. The last section describes some of the processes through which these themes are embedded in the vocabulary of Hong Kong English and illustrates these processes with examples from the data.

Ideology and the lexicon of World Englishes

The starting point of this work is the observation that studies of varieties of English around the world tend to describe linguistic innovations without explaining how and why they come about. Consequently, these studies are often left without adequate criteria for deciding what 'belongs to' a variety of English and what does not, criteria that would allow us to produce descriptions of these varieties 'in their own terms'. Studies in the field of World Englishes (e.g. Kachru, 1986) have so far explained linguistic innovation in varieties of English in only the most general terms through references to 'acculturation', or the adaptation of language to social and environmental conditions. Moreover, these studies have tended to make the reductive assumption that observable features of text express the national or indigenous cultures of those who produce them[2]. Employing the mediating concept of ideology, however, we are able to avoid oversimplified views of language variation as a mirror of cultural variation by showing how social conditions are *refracted* in language forms. The aim of analysing linguistic variation in relation to ideological variation is therefore to produce more adequate descriptions of varieties of English in terms of relationships between social context and linguistic form.

The theoretical framework for this work is based upon insights from the field of critical theory. Belsey (1980) formulates succinctly the "post-Saussurean" view of language on which this theory is based:

> Common sense appears obvious because it is inscribed in the language that we speak. Post-Saussurean theory, therefore, starts from an analysis of language, proposing that language is not transparent, not merely the *medium* in which autonomous individuals transmit messages to each other about an independently constituted world of things. On the contrary, it is language which offers the possibility of constructing a world of individuals and things, and of differentiating between them. The transparency of language is an illusion. (p.4)

This view of language emerges from attempts by Gramsci and Althusser to mould Marxist conceptions of ideology to the complexities of the 20th century. It forms the basis of work in the field of language studies by Fowler et al.(1979); Kress & Hodge (1979), Mey (1985), Fairclough (1989; 1992), Wodak (1989) and van Dijk (1993) among others. It has been directly applied to the analysis of newspaper text by van Dijk (1988) and Fowler (1991). A similar view of language emerges from the sociology of Berger & Luckmann (1966) which emphasises the role of language in the "social construction of reality" and the importance of linguistic form as symbol:

> Language is capable not only of constructing symbols that are highly abstracted from everyday experience, but also of 'bringing back' these symbols and appresenting them as objectively real elements in everyday life. In this manner, symbolism and symbolic language become essential constituents of the reality of everyday life and of common-sense apprehension of this reality. I live in a world of signs *and* symbols every day.

[2] These assumptions are made throughout the work of Kachru. See, for example, Kachru (1986, p.28) discussing lexical innovations such as *caste mark, forehead marking* and *communal question* in South Asian varieties of English: "These innovations and their semantic extensions or restrictions are, therefore, indicative of acculturation of English in new sociocultural and linguisitc contexts, and reflect its acceptance as a vehicle of non-native social norms and ecological needs."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Edelman (1977), similarly, has studied politics as symbolic action, arguing that "it is *language* about political events rather than the events themselves that everyone experiences" (p.142).

The view that language constructs social reality challenges the twin assumptions that linguistic innovation in varieties of English is a medium for the expression of indigenous cultural and linguistic norms and that texts reflect the norms of those who produce them. Once the transparency of language is challenged, with it falls the assumption that linguistic innovations exist simply because the things they refer to are 'there' either within the speaker or the speaker's objectively given world. Varieties of English around the world come to be seen as constructions of reality specific to the social formations within which they operate, and the analysis of linguistic innovations becomes a question of understanding whose interests particular versions of reality serve and how they do so. Critical language theory also greatly expands the range of linguistic items that are likely to be considered under the heading of a variety of world English because the criterion that an innovation must somehow express local culture and belong to local speakers no longer applies. In the field of lexis we would certainly want to give much closer attention to the names of things, institutions and events than has been customary in the description of World Englishes. These categories of lexis have always had an equivocal status in World Englishes because they appear to reflect directly variations in 'reality' rather than variations in linguistic form. In the type of analysis I am proposing, however, it is precisely the potential for constructing such variations in reality that is of interest when we investigate variations in linguistic form.

In the remainder of this section, I will outline the methodology that I intend to use in analysing the political vocabulary of Hong Kong English. In order to do so, I will first need to establish the sense in which I use the terms ideology and discourse and then comment on how these concepts operate at the level of the lexicon. I will also need to discuss how these concepts apply to English as a world language and public discourse in a little more detail.

Ideology and discourse are conventionally considered as 'difficult' concepts that evade clear definition (for more detailed discussion in the context of language study, see Fairclough, 1989; 1992 and Fowler, 1991). The following are adopted here as working definitions. At the most basic level, ideologies can be described as systematically organised representations of the world which embody the interests and goals of particular social groups. Discourse is treated here as ideology encoded in text. However, concepts of ideology and discourse only become useful when they are understood in terms of social relations that are structured in terms of power and dominance within social formations. Ideologies within a social formation do not operate independently of each other. They are constituted in mutual relations of interdependence within ideological systems that are structured according to the relative power of social groups.

The dominant ideology of a social formation is one that fundamentally represents the interests of its most powerful groups. But this is not to say that these interests are represented directly. Dominant ideologies characteristically legitimise fundamental power relations by suppressing the overt interests of the dominant and accommodating those of the dominated. In social formations where the social order is legitimised and reproduced mainly through consensus, the interests and goals of dominant social groups are framed ideologically in terms of the interests of the society as a whole. Ideology is conveyed through discourse where it is recoverable in the form of themes, or propositions that underlie the coherence of text. Such themes are often present only in the form of propositions that the reader must supply in order to make sense of a discourse. However, these propositions may be explicitly formulated in other discourses, allowing us to make use of information from one discourse to make sense of another.

In seeking to represent the interests of society as a whole, dominant ideologies strive towards universality and objectivity. One of the ways they do this is through the struggle to define reality through language. Fairclough (1989) argues that language is not only a *site* of ideological struggle - the medium through which ideologies are expressed - it is also a *stake* in that struggle:

> Having the power to determine things like which word meanings or which linguistic and communicative norms are legitimate or 'correct' or 'appropriate' is an aspect of social and ideological power, and therefore a focus of ideological

> struggle. Seeing existing language practices and orders of discourse as reflecting the victories and defeats of past struggle, and as stakes which are struggled over, is, along with the complementary concept of 'power behind discourse', a major characteristic of critical language study...(p.88-89)

At the same time, ideologies struggle to assert the objectivity of language itself by establishing existing language practices as 'standard' or as universally valid. In this sense, dominant ideologies are conveyed not only through discourse but also within the linguistic forms which constitute it. Linguistic innovation in varieties of world English is therefore of particular interest for what it may reveal about specific ideological relations within different social formations.

Social reality is defined at the level of the lexicon through the lexicalisation of themes in discourse. In the study of word formation, lexicalisation refers to the process by which a lexical form becomes established as an item in the vocabulary of a language. In this paper, I use the same term more narrowly to refer to the embedding of an ideological form within a fixed item in the vocabulary. The process of embedding makes use of two basic mechanisms: naming and metaphor. I have already questioned the notion that things have names simply because they are 'there'. On the contrary, naming is a social act which determines what falls within the purview of shared subjective realities, and how those realities are categorised. When language adapts to 'new environments' it is the process of naming which determines what is 'new' and what is 'familiar', what is significant and what is not. In varieties of world English, then, what gets named and what does not is an ideological issue. Metaphor - in its most general sense, the naming of one thing by reference to another - is concerned with *how* things get named. When metaphors are used as names, they open links between categories within the linguistic system and close off others. By suggesting that a thing be perceived as one kind of thing but not another, lexical innovations can therefore attempt to impose new versions of social reality.

When ideological themes within a discourse are condensed into single vocabulary items, these items may evoke complex sets of ideological and emotional relations within the discourse. It is in this sense that a relatively small number of lexical items within a discourse may play a disproportionate part in sustaining an ideology and the interests that it serves. In the third section of this paper, I will look at how a number of themes within official discourse in Hong Kong are condensed and embedded in a relatively small number of items within the general vocabulary of 'the news'.

To conclude this section, I want to look at what the concept of 'English as a world language' means in the context of the ideas developed so far. As a lexical item in its own right *English as a world language* is itself a trigger for a complex set of ideological relations. It carries with it the notion that the rapid spread of English in a post-colonial world is a response to a need for an international language in an age of mass global communications. Implicit in the concept is an idea that English belongs no longer to the colonial master but to the world, an ideologically neutral instrument to be used in the service of whoever needs it. Phillipson's (1992) work, however, points to evidence of the systematic promotion of English as a world language by official Western agencies, and indicates that English is implicated in the maintenance of neo-colonial relations of dependence and the preservation of elites across the world. Within the multilingual settings of Asia, English is everywhere the language of an elite. Moreover, English as a world language is seldom ideologically 'neutral' as it is conveyed in the form of Western discourses of 'democracy', 'modernity' and 'progress' (Pennycook, 1994).

In Hong Kong (as in most of the multilingual settings of Asia) English is not only a second language, it is also an elite language in two senses. The concept of 'English as an international language' means that English constitutes a means for continuing Western involvement in, and influence over, Asian affairs - the communicative basis for a neo-colonial world order. 'English as an intranational language' means on the other hand that English constitutes a linguistic basis for social differentiation in societies where social status is linked to an ability to use English, and above all pass examinations in it. 'English as an international *and* intranational language', therefore, supports the internal social structures of many Asian societies within the global framework of a Western-dominated world order.

These observations have important implications for descriptive work on varieties of English in the multilingual settings of Asia. In these settings we may reasonably expect the English-medium press and media to be implicated in conveying ideologies which support indigenous English-speaking elites, and that aspects of these ideologies will be apparent in innovations in their vocabulary. In multilingual settings, English-medium newspapers may also play an important role in setting and establishing the local standard for English usage. Localised vocabulary in these newspapers may therefore be seen either as internationally standard or as part of a register which has an ambivalent status between international and local. In settings where English is predominantly a second language, and where English-medium newspapers may be used as a tool for language teaching, localised vocabulary therefore readily passes into general usage. While the most recent work in the field of critical language studies (cf. Fairclough, 1992, p.28) urges us not to take the ideological effects of text for granted by assuming an uncritical reader, we should also bear in mind that in the multilingual settings of Asia the readers' critical faculties must be exercised in a second language and often in linguistic climates that conspire to mystify the local character of much of what they read[3] In the next section, I will offer a somewhat more detailed analysis of what interests such a mystification might serve in the Hong Kong context.

The political discourse of Hong Kong English

Officially, Hong Kong is a British colony administered by a Governor appointed by the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister. Under the terms of a 1984 agreement between the British and Chinese governments known as the Joint Declaration, China will resume sovereignty in 1997, when Hong Kong will become a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China. The Joint Declaration specifies that Hong Kong's socio-economic system and basic freedoms will remain, and that the SAR will be autonomous save in foreign and defence matters.

Leung's (1990a, p.33) comparison of socioeconomic indicators in Hong Kong with similar indicators in stable democratic systems around the world suggests that "*socio-economically* Hong Kong is well equipped to be a stable democracy". Hong Kong does share two important features with Western democratic systems, a free press and an independent legal system, but it does not have popularly elected government. In Hong Kong colonial rule in a post-colonial world is politically legitimated through a network of permanent and ad hoc advisory bodies. The first and second most important political institutions are the Executive Council and Legislative Council. Legislation passed by the Legislative Council requires the consent of the Governor and the Queen. Although the Governor has only exercised the power of veto once (in 1946), this limitation on the powers of the Legislative Council has been an issue of concern. Both Councils are advisory bodies with no power to make major decisions or pass laws without the consent of the Governor. Members of the Executive Council are appointed by the Governor while a minority of members of the Legislative Council are selected by direct popular election. Since the violent suppression of student protests in Beijing in 1989, Britain has come under increasing pressure from democratic forces in Hong Kong to democratise Hong Kong's political system before 1997.

An important aspect of the response to this pressure for democratisation has been to actively promote the image of a 'democratic' form of colonialism. At the beginning of the period of data collection for this project in November 1992, Governor David Wilson - a diplomat - was replaced by Christopher Patten - then Chairman of the British Conservative Party who had failed to retain his parliamentary seat in the General Election of that year. At his swearing-in ceremony, Patten declined to wear the traditional plumed hat and regalia of an incoming Governor. This

[3] This mystification is systematically supported by claims in the literature that each variety of world English contains within it a level at which it is virtually indistinguishable from 'international standard English'. Quirk (1985, p.6) makes such a claim for English media in Asia in his suggestion that the BBC World Service of London, All India Radio, the Singapore *Straits Times* and the *Japan Times* "adhere to forms of English familiarly produced by only a minority of English speakers in any of the four countries concerned. And - mere accent alone apart - they observe as uniform a standard as that manifest in any language on earth."

event was reported in the *South China Morning Post* (7.11.92, p.3) under the headline "British press critical of dress-sense" and the following extract reprinted from the *Times* of London:

> It was a day of ramrod salutes, red carpets, shouting sergeant majors and judges in wigs .... But Chris Patten, the last 'His Excellency' to be cheered ashore, defied convention, resolutely refusing to play the fancy-uniforms game. Unlike his predecessor, Lord Wilson, who sailed away last month in the crisp white twill suit and plumed helmet of convention, Mr Patten ambled ashore looking hot and rather shambolic in a drab grey suit.

This event was followed by a series of 'meet-the-people' style visits, public meetings and question times that suggested the Governor might be campaigning for a post to which he need not, in fact, seek re-election. The media has subsequently paid a good deal of attention to Patten's health and personal appearance, his family and their pastimes, and the adventures of their dogs. More seriously, the Governor has, at the risk of disrupting Anglo-Chinese relations, himself proposed a package of limited political reforms. These have become known as 'Patten's reforms', and have allowed the media to portray the Governor as a principal agent of democratisation in Hong Kong. These all indicate the extent to which public discourse has become important in the legitimation of British rule in its final years.

The experience of decolonisation elsewhere in the world suggests that the departing colonial power will attempt in the last years of its rule to secure its own interests under whatever arrangements may follow. The Hong Kong government's primary economic interest is therefore to secure the future of Hong Kong's 'laissez faire' capitalist system which guarantees access for foreign companies and capital. Given that Britain is committed to hand over sovereignty to China in 1997, this interest is best served by measures that preserve the integrity and autonomy of Hong Kong within China. One way of achieving this is through democratisation, but at the same time Britain has clear interests in maintaining stability and ensuring that the handover of sovereignty does take place. These interests set the basic framework for official political discourse in Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong government is also subject to pressure and influence from a number of sources through its various advisory bodies. Criticising the notion that the bureaucracy that administers Hong Kong is autonomous and ideologically neutral, Leung (1990b, p.18) argues:

> Empirically, the political domination of the élite class is evidenced by the overwhelming presence of top bureaucrats, wealthy business men and professionals in the Executive, Legislative, and Urban Councils, and in a number of important advisory boards, committees and tribunal panels which the government consults in making its policies.

While the democratisation of political institutions is compatible with the interests of the rising middle class and with the aims of foreign capital in Hong Kong, it is less so for the "indigenous bourgeoisie" whose aversion to democratisation makes them into political allies of China (Leung 1990b, p.38). This conflict of interests has created a degree of tension between those who favour a more rapid rate of reform and those who argue against 'rocking the boat'. This indicates that the political discourse of the Hong Kong media not only serves the interests of Britain as departing colonial power, it also promotes the interests of factions in Hong Kong who, if they are not actually pro-British, at least share aims and values which are compatible with continued access of foreign capital to Hong Kong markets.

The overwhelming majority of Hong Kong's inhabitants are Chinese and speak Cantonese as a language of first choice. English is used within the expatriate community, and for certain functions in domains such as the law, government and business. English is built into the social fabric of Hong Kong as an elite language through a predominantly English-medium education system in which success in English language is to some degree synonymous with academic and subsequently socio-economic success. Hong Kong's English-medium press by definition serves a social elite of expatriates and bilinguals. It also plays a role within the

education system where newspapers are often seen as means of broadening students' English skills. Hong Kong currently has three English-medium daily newspapers: the *South China Morning Post*, the *Hongkong Standard*, and *Eastern Express*. Of the three, the *South China Morning Post* is considered to be the 'establishment' newspaper, although a recent change of ownership has called this status into question. It is also, according to folk wisdom, the 'best written', and therefore has the greatest claim towards setting a standard for English usage in the local context. Although it is by no means uncritical of official policy, the *South China Morning Post* gives considerable space to government views. The Governor himself is an occasional contributor of feature columns and major official speeches tend to be reported in full. An indication of attitudes to current policies is found in recent informal photo-features on the Governor's lighter duties. One of these, for example, pictures the Governor in white jacket and tee-shirt at the Kowloon Cricket Club holding aloft a cricket bat. Under the headline "Patten bats for Hong Kong", the article reports:

> The bat, to be auctioned for charity, has received a $50,000 offer from an anonymous Indian businessman. Yesterday, however, it was held in the capable hands of Mr Patten (*Sunday Morning Post*, 17.4.1994, p.1)

It should be stressed, however, that Hong Kong's English-medium newspapers are independent and frequently critical of government policy on particular issues. My concern here, however, is less with editorial policy than with the support that is offered to a dominant ideology through a shared vocabulary. In the remainder of this section, I will attempt to get at this dominant ideology by looking at some prominent themes in the official discourse of Hong Kong politics. These will be illustrated mainly by quotations from Governor Christopher Patten either writing or interviewed in the *South China Morning Post*.

At the basis of official political discourse in Hong Kong is a map on which Hong Kong, Britain and China appear as fixed and stable entities. In this discourse, Hong Kong is generally to be found *between* Britain and China, who appear as agents whose actions have equal and reciprocal value with regard to Hong Kong. We see this relationship put into action in a statement by Governor Chris Patten (writing in the *South China Morning Post*, 14.1.94, p.21) commenting on the possibility that a Chinese government might put aside electoral arrangements made before its resumption of sovereignty in 1997:

> Of course it is true that we could put in place arrangements for the 1994 and 1995 elections and see them cast aside by China after 1997 in its first act of sovereignty. Beijing officials last month once again threatened to do precisely this - in blatant contradiction of their own post-1997 constitution for Hong Kong. But the argument that China may act against Hong Kong's interests (and its own) in the future, cannot be a persuasive argument for us to do the same today.

Reciprocity in the actions of Britain and China in regard to Hong Kong, however, is qualified by a systematic ambiguity in the separate identities of Britain and Hong Kong. In the first sentence of Patten's argument, the *we* that *could put in place arrangements* is ambiguous since such arrangements would not be made directly by the British government, but by the Hong Kong government. This *we* therefore appears to subsume Britain as the ruling power in Hong Kong under the idea of Hong Kong as an independent agent. In the last sentence, on the other hand, the *us* that *cannot do the same today* clearly refers to Britain alone. It can hardly refer to Hong Kong since this would introduce the pragmatic oddity of Hong Kong acting against its own interests. The argument continues:

> Moreover, if we have a credible system, why should China want to remove from elected office in 1997 men and women who will have been elected by their fellow citizens? This is hardly the best way of winning hearts and minds. Hong Kong has been a spectacular success story - largely the result of Shanghainese and Cantonese entrepreneurialism combined with the values of a plural society. Provided this combination survives the transition through 1997, Hong Kong

should be uniquely placed to contribute further to China's successful opening up to the world.

In the *we* of the first sentence, Britain as ruling power is entirely subsumed within the Hong Kong that has *a credible system*. The second pro-form in this sentence, *their*, on the other hand, distances *China* from Hong Kong. The reference to Hong Kong people as the *fellow citizens* of China becomes almost ironic, and the passage continues with syntactic forms in which China and Hong Kong remain clearly separate. While asserting the existence of Hong Kong as an autonomous entity (both now and in the future) and the reciprocity of British and Chinese action in regard to Hong Kong, official discourse systematically distances Hong Kong from China, while drawing it towards Britain.

This discourse might seem to be a natural reflection of current political realities in Hong Kong. However, it is worth noting how the discourse actually creates social reality in the form of a *future* for Hong Kong as an autonomous entity within China. Chinese government negotiators on the future of Hong Kong have been obliged to acknowledge this discourse although it contradicts the long-standing claim that Hong Kong is in fact a part of China. But while Chinese discourse has accommodated to the reciprocity of British and Chinese actions in regard to Hong Kong, it has been less inclined to accept the ambiguity involved in Governor Patten's discursive status as representative of Britain in Hong Kong *and* representative of Hong Kong.

The ambiguity of Britain's identity in Hong Kong is also seen in two further elements within the discourse. The first of these is a frequently asserted assumption that in this period of late colonialism, Britain's own interests in Hong Kong are subordinate to those of the Hong Kong people. In a *South China Morning Post* interview (18.12.93, p.21) Patten answers a question as to whether a breakdown in Sino-British talks may affect British interests as follows:

> The main British interest which is at stake is our concern for the future of Hong Kong. That is what priority we have on our agenda... People talk about the impact of our determination to stand up for Hong Kong. There is no element in British-China relations that is as important as the proper carrying out of our responsibilities in this community.

Again, the discourse creates a *future* for Hong Kong, and by equating British interests with this future a separate British colonial interest is denied. Phrases such as *our concern*, *our determination* and *our responsibility* echo 19th century notions of empire as a 'burden' - a term which Patten uses elsewhere (*South China Morning Post*, 14.1.94, p.21) in a response to the charge that Britain's purpose in the last years of colonial rule is to prolong its influence beyond 1997:

> It's a bizarre view of our colonial history, a history in which we laid down the imperial burden with so little fuss, and such genial intentions to install and safeguard the institutions of a plural society.

The term *plural society* introduces the second element of ambiguity, which concerns the characterisation of Hong Kong's social and political system. Writing from a self-declared 'liberal' standpoint, Davies and Roberts (1990, p.104) characterise the official interpretation of this system in the following terms:

> Hong Kong's colonial government is answerable in the last analysis to the democratically elected government in Britain. Hence Hong Kong has a formally undemocratic governmental system which none the less adheres to democratic values. The key question is whether this state of affairs is sustainable after 1997 when sovereignty over Hong Kong passes to the People's Republic of China and the roots of Hong Kong's governmental system in an operationally democratic system are formally cut.

In official discourse, therefore, British parliamentary democracy underwrites freedoms in Hong Kong which are questioned only by the possibility of their removal by a future Chinese government which is portrayed as fundamentally undemocratic. This has enabled the present Governor to present himself as a 'champion of democracy'. Urging Hong Kong journalists to defend press freedom, Patten is reported as saying:

> "Hong Kong is such a free society. It is today, and I hope it will be after 1997" (*South China Morning Post* 18.1.94, p.3)

The ambiguity in the notion of a *free society* that remains under colonial rule is complex. It allows the idea of freedom to be presented in terms of a modified Western democratic discourse which emphasises certain institutional forms (notably a free press, an independent judiciary and freedom of thought within an independent higher education system) and conceals others (notably democratic elections and national self-determination). Crucially, it minimises Britain's colonial role in Hong Kong's past present and future, and creates discursively the future as *threat* - a threat of the removal of freedoms which is the ideological counterpart of Patten's *hope* for Hong Kong's post-1997 future.

The idea of *hope* links in to a further element in official discourse which emphasises, in spite whatever intentions and priorities Britain may have, the inevitability of Hong Kong's future integration with China. Patten argues:

> In Hong Kong, we are bringing the story almost to an end. Hong Kong, of course, is unlike our other colonies. Though no one could doubt the capacity of this great city, it has never enjoyed the prospect of independence. History and geography have spelt out another future, the assumption of Chinese sovereignty in 1997. This has determined and constrained political and institutional development in the territory. While it had been governed under the eyes of Parliament at Westminster, its own democratical evolution has been limited by its historical destination.

In this passage, the notion that Hong Kong's political and institutional development is constrained by *history and geography* is underwritten by a 'discourse of fate' signalled by the words *story, prospect, historical destination.* Establishing history and geography as abstract concepts without agents minimises the role of British colonialism in the creation of this history and geography. Hong Kong's current situation is effectively dehistoricised and decontextualised. Fatalism about Hong Kong's past, in turn, prepares for a future from which uncertainty is all but removed, a future in which the best that can be hoped for is a continuation of the present. By stressing continuity above change, official policy on the period up to 1997 has ruled out the possibility of radical social or political restructuring:

> The aim of the government in the period up to 1997 is that Hong Kong's system of representative government should be able to evolve gradually and progressively from the present system, in a manner that commands the full confidence of the people of Hong Kong, ensures that government remains both responsive and effective and provides for a smooth transfer of government in 1997 and a high degree of continuity thereafter. (Hong Kong Government, Feb. 1988, White Paper: The Development of Representative Government: The Way Forward para. 78 - cited in Leung 1990a, p.27)

Interestingly, this discourse of *smoothness* and *continuity* is suppressed in current official discourse, since current policy appears to allow for some degree of disruption in Sino-British relations. The same discourse has apparently been retained, however, by Patten's political opponents. As Terry Cheng reports (*Hongkong Standard*, 27.4.94, p.12):

> China should review its united front tactics towards Hong Kong as it has now begun counting more on itself to ensure a smooth transfer of sovereignty.... Now Beijing has identified a smooth transfer of sovereignty and setting up of the SAR

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

government and legislature as its objectives. In the course of achieving these, it has decided that the British side, spearheaded by Governor Patten, is the main obstacle and enemy, which should be got rid of.

What I have argued so far will perhaps have made clear that discourse does not directly reflect the interests of dominant groups. Rather official discourse tends to rationalise and legitimise the pursuit of those interests by maintaining the social and political structures which best facilitate them. Official discourse often takes its stand on the status quo, but in the final years of British colonial rule in Hong Kong the imminent return to Chinese sovereignty rules out this possibility. Consequently we find discourses which minimise the colonial character of British rule and which emphasise the autonomy of Hong Kong. Paradoxically, British colonialism finds its interests (and those of 'the West' in general) best served by an acceptance of decolonisation as the inevitable. Anything else might create a climate of instability which would threaten the continuation of capitalism in Hong Kong and close off the region to Western interests. Within these limits British and Western interests are also served by the promotion of a 'discourse of democracy' in which notions of freedom are framed in essentially western terms.

It should be noted that material interests and discourse need not coincide. At the level of discourse, for example, British material interests are served by an assertion that such interests are of minor importance in relation to the interests of the 'community' as a whole. Also, discursive themes need not necessarily be compatible. The notion of a 'free society' in Hong Kong does not sit easily with the idea of its 'inevitable' return to Chinese sovereignty. Such contradictions are common in political discourse, however, and can perhaps be explained in terms of what Edelman (1977, p.5) calls "social adjustment through contradictory beliefs," an ambivalence that permits justification of changing roles and adaptation to changing social situations. Different discourses may therefore be available for different sets of circumstances.

The discursive themes identified in this section have been illustrated by direct citations from official sources, some of which outline official ideological premises in explicit terms. Although these citations illustrate language used for ideological purposes, they do not as yet show us ideology in language itself. Nor do they indicate very much about Hong Kong English as a variety of English. In the next section, however, I want to indicate how these ideological premises become embodied in the language through specific processes of lexicalisation.

Political vocabulary in the news

In the last section, I illustrated the political discourse of Hong Kong English with citations from official sources, particularly from text attributed to the Governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten. In this section, I will be using illustrations dra.n by and large from ordinary news reports in Hong Kong's English-medium newspapers. Mass circulation newspapers are a form of public discourse to which social elites have privileged access. At the same time, the language of newspaper reporting can be considered a form of 'everyday language' in the sense that it is a language which we encounter daily, one with which we are familiar, and to which we do not usually pay any special attention. Moreover, newspaper reports are supposed to convey the 'facts' about events in the world without bias and in neutral terms.

In this section I will present evidence to show how the ideological themes discussed in the last section are embodied within the vocabulary of these newspaper reports. This is not to suggest that Hong Kong's English-medium newspapers are in any way intentionally 'biased' or 'slanted'. My concern is rather to show that the ideological themes of an official discourse are present within the normal, everyday, 'neutral' vocabulary that these newspapers are constrained to use if they are to be comprehensible to their readers. Since I am focusing on the special vocabulary of Hong Kong's social and political life, the implication is that ideological factors have a powerful explanatory force in relation to Hong Kong English.

In an earlier section, I discussed two major components in processes of lexicalisation, or the transformation of ideology into lexis: naming and metaphor. These components are too general to act as organising categories for the vocabulary discussed below. The eight headings under which I have organised this vocabulary represent a somewhat more refined system of categories. It is an *ad hoc* system, however, and one that contains a good deal of overlap since it is often the case that more than one process can be seen to be at work in any one lexicalisation. My aim, however, is not to produce a watertight classification scheme, but to point to certain processes in the lexicon and illustrate them with examples from the data.

Nominalisation refers to the transformation of a verbal process into a nominal. For Kress & Hodge (1979, p.34-35) nominalisation is a specific form of "transformation" which is described as a move from explicit to less explicit linguistic forms with the typical function of "mystification and distortion". They suggest (p.27) that when verbal processes are nominalised, there is a loss of modality and tense, simplicity r places complexity and the nominal itself can become an actor or participant in other verbal processes.

Some of the more interesting nominals found in Hong Kong newspaper reports are those which refer to Hong Kong's future, such as *convergence*, *the transition*, *the handover*, *the takeover* and *continuity*. Each of these nominals refers to a specific concept in the political sphere. *Convergence* refers to a policy whereby changes in the socio-political structure of Hong Kong before 1997 should *converge with* the Basic Law for the future Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong drawn up under the authority of the Chinese National People's Congress. *The transition* refers to the process of transition from British to Chinese rule and *the handover* or *takeover* to the transfer of power which will be at its centre. *Continuity* refers to the continuation of Hong Kong's capitalist system and way of life beyond 1997. Each of these terms can be used as a nominal without any further gloss or explanation being necessary:

> ... convergence, the hallmark of Government policy towards the transition, dictates otherwise. It means that what is done now must not conflict with what is planned after the Chinese takeover. (*Sunday Morning Post*, 31.5.92, p.9)

> ... Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who told us to go home and let continuity and convergence run their course. (Allen Lee writing in the *Hongkong Standard*, 23.3.94, p.2)

With the loss of modality and tense entailed in these nominalisations, processes that may occur in the future are transformed into facts which appear inevitable and unavoidable. A social and political future is inscribed in the vocabulary and therefore placed beyond the bounds of reasonable debate.

Naming by analogy is a process of word-formation common when a language encounters a new environment. British, American and Australian English each have a bird called a *robin* but none of these birds are exactly the same. Naming by analogy, then, refers to cases where something is given a name because it resembles something which carries that name elsewhere in the world, although it may differ in certain crucial respects. Hong Kong has an institution called the *Legislative Council* (or *Legco*). Although the legislative powers of the Legislative Council are circumscribed by the colonial framework of government, it is referred to as a *legislature* and its members are known as *legislators*. These terms underwrite the 'discourse of democracy' in Hong Kong, although their effect is unclear since the status of the Legislative Council is well-known within Hong Kong. In the following citation, an independent *legislator* takes issue with the terminology:

> Being a colonial legislature, legislation passed by Legco can only take effect after it is signed by the Governor. After that the Queen can still disallow it. Thus, I have never had any illusions about Legco's legislative power. (Emily Lau writing in the *South China Morning Post*, 21.3.94, p.16)

What is interesting here is that in order to impose her own version of reality, Emily Lau is obliged not only to do the ideological 'work' of deconstructing an official vocabulary, in doing so she must also deconstruct her own role and status as *legislator* (something which she is, of course, quite prepared to do).

A second instance of naming by analogy is the term *mainland China* (and derivatives such as *the mainland, mainlander*) widely used to designate the territory and the inhabitants of China in contrast to those of Hong Kong. The oddity of this usage is that large parts of the territory of Hong Kong are geographically part of the mainland, and that Hong Kong island is itself separated from 'the mainland' by only a few hundred metres of sea. The term arises from analogy with the contrast between *Taiwan* and *mainland China*, where geographical and political distinctions more neatly coincide. In the case of Taiwan, the use of *mainland China* legitimates an ideology of a government in exile, one which has claimed jurisdiction over the whole land mass of China. The extension of the term to the Hong Kong context suggests that Taiwan and Hong Kong stand in a similar relationship towards China. This item in the lexicon, therefore, helps to dehistoricise the current situation of Hong Kong and to minimise the role of colonialism in its creation.

Hollow names. Edelman (1977, p.78-79) observes that in the United States political and administrative system:

> The names of administrative organizations and of their subunits call attention to interests that are widely shared and that evoke broad support; they never adequately specify the groups to which an organization has to respond in order to survive.

I have used the term 'hollow names' for instances, common in Hong Kong also, where the function of a document or institution is concealed behind a neutral name, which is in the final analysis semantically empty. *The Joint Declaration*, for example, names the basic agreement under which Britain agreed to return Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty, *the Basic Law* names the constitution under which Hong Kong will function as a *Special Administrative Region* of China from 1997, while *the Preliminary Working Committee* is a name given to the Chinese government's advisory body on Hong Kong affairs widely regarded as a 'government-in-waiting'. The names given to bodies of this kind are clearly euphemistic. They perhaps help to avoid alarm and ideological conflict and to ensure the transition to Chinese sovereignty runs smoothly. *The transition* and *1997* could also be described as hollow names which suggest that potentially tumultuous events will not in fact be so.

Relexicalisation is defined by Fowler (1991, p.84) as "the promotion of a new term where it is claimed that a new concept is at issue". Relexicalisation is a sign of ideological shift from one way of viewing an issue to another. Many of the lexical items discussed in this paper can be interpreted in this way, but here I will comment on one particular instance concerned with the designation of the political status of Hong Kong. Davies & Roberts (1990, p.69) report that:

> Since 1976, the term 'colony,' with respect to Hong Kong, has been officially abandoned and the term 'territory' used in its stead, although it remains legally a crown colony.

This redesignation of Hong Kong from *colony* to *territory* apparently coincided with the interests of the Chinese government, who succeeded in having Hong Kong removed from the United Nations' list of colonial territories. By ceasing to refer to Hong Kong as a *colony*, official discourse both dehistoricised Hong Kong and undermined the legitimacy of possible claims to *independence* at the level of the vocabulary. While manipulation of language by official agencies is by no means unusual, what is significant here is that the term *colony* appears to have disappeared almost entirely from the vocabulary of news reports. *Colony, colonial* and *colonialism* are still available for use, of course, but to use them (cf. the citation from Emily Lau above) clearly marks the user as a critic.

Mythical actors. Menz (1989, p.236) uses the term "mythical groups" to refer to categories such as *the average man* or *the silent majority* that are creations of discourse and have no clearly identifiable social correlates. I use the term 'mythical actors' in a similar but broader sense for social categories which appear substantial but are in reality products of discourse. A well-known instance of this in Hong Kong is the *sandwich class*:

> The sandwich class, so-called because it describes people who fall between those groups which are either eligible for public housing or can afford to buy their own home, is the subject of a new working group. (*South China Morning Post*, 17.5.92)

The *sandwich class* is a group which has acquired reality in relation to issues of housing at a time of rapidly rising land prices. At the same time, the term can be said to designate the 'middle class', which constitutes the potential political base for the 'democratic' movement in Hong Kong. In terms of the political considerations outlined earlier, the *sandwich class* might therefore be considered as a potential pro-Western bulwark against the 'Chinese bourgeoisie'. Significantly, the *sandwich class* is the only 'class' in Hong Kong to have been named in English. Its name suggests that it is the neglected victim of economic circumstances, more so it seems than those eligible for public housing who earn considerably less. As such it has been singled out for special attention, most recently through a widely publicised measure known as *the Sandwich Class Housing Loan Scheme*.

Mythical agents are often described in terms of dichotomies which place individuals and groups, willingly or unwillingly, on one or another side of a fence. In Hong Kong's political life an important dichotomy has been drawn between *pro-democracy* and *pro-China* tendencies. These are clearly not equivalent categorisations, however. Of the two, the second is the more problematic. Because the term *communist* is avoided for groups in Hong Kong, *pro-China* is a designation applied to a range of groups and individuals from those who openly support the Chinese Communist Party to supporters of capitalism who nevertheless see their interests best-served by an alliance with the Chinese government. *Pro-democracy* is clearly associated with positive values, while *pro-China* appears to have become an unwelcome label. Jackie Sam, writing in the *Hongkong Standard* (19.4.94, p.4) argues that:

> ... once China's patronage is accepted, the risk of being labelled "pro-China" by the media is very high. Until 1997, at least, the label, as Mr [Martin] Lee once described it, is "the kiss of death".

A week after this comment was published, the *Hongkong Standard* (27.4.94, p.1) reported that Jimmy McGregor had lost his seat on the general committee of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce and with it the likelihood of remaining as a member of the Legislative Council beyond the 1995 elections. Mr McGregor is reported as saying:

> "Many chamber members, especially the larger, pro-China companies, do not back my views which support democratic reforms in Hong Kong."

In response, the newly-elected chairman, William Fung, is reported as saying:

> "If you look at the composition of our general committee membership, I don't know how anyone can say it is pro-China,... We are pro-Hong Kong".

The *pro-democracy / pro-China* dichotomy provides a potentially powerful set of labels. To be *pro-China* is to be under suspicion of being both 'anti-democracy' and 'anti-Hong Kong'. To be *pro-democracy* on the other hand does not seem to carry the corresponding stigma of being either 'pro-Britain' or 'anti-China'.

A similar dichotomy is drawn between *local* and *expatriate*:

> Local and expatriate civil service unions have been holding confidential talks with the government for the past three weeks. (*Hongkong Standard*, 23.3.94, p.3)

The uses of the word *local* and its derivatives in Hong Kong English are discussed in some detail in Benson (1994). Since that paper was written, the issue of the possible transfer of senior civil servants on expatriate contracts to local terms has blown up. The debate on this issue has become a debate over categorisations, with expatriate unions challenging the dichotomy by claiming that the term *local* could be applied to long-serving *expatriates* who have acquired Hong Kong resident status. Here it seems that a dichotomy which has in the past helped to distinguish the interests of the colonial power from those of the colonised may have come back to haunt those who may have found it so useful in the past.

Local and *expatriate* are membership categories that obscure a number of complex issues of nationality and ethnicity. Membership categories for nationality and ethnicity in Hong Kong are too complex to cover in detail in this paper. It is worth noting, however, the ambiguity of the word *Chinese*. On the one hand this refers to the ethnicity of an overwhelming majority of the residents of Hong Kong, while on the other hand it refers to the nationality of the residents of the People's Republic of China. The word *local* often (but by no means always) substitutes for the first of these senses, creating a possible dichotomy between *local* and *Chinese*. The basis of this dichotomy is less than clear, however, since so many of the present population of Hong Kong were either born in the People's Republic of China or retain family ties there. However real this dichotomy may be, we can observe that it is at least reinforced in the vocabulary of Hong Kong English, through repeated use of *Chinese* (and indeed *China*) to refer to the People's Republic of China alone. While distinctions in the vocabulary place distance between Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China, however, they do not appear to give Hong Kong a strong independent identity. One of the most remarkable features in the *South China Morning Post* data is the complete absence of any single term that serves as a name for 'a person who comes from Hong Kong' other than *Hong Kong resident, local man/woman*, and so on (the word *Hongkonger* is used occasionally in the *Hongkong Standard*, but does not appear at all in the corpus of Hong Kong news reports).

Fixed collocations are multi-word combinations that are regularly found within a corpus of text. Here I will mention two types. Adjective-noun collocations and longer nominal forms which I call 'incantations'.

Fixed adjective-noun collocations function as simple nominals. When this happens, a number of ideological effects can occur. Fairclough (1989, p.113) notes, for example, how in the fixed collocations *sick behaviour* and *healthy behaviour*, a noun from the domain of psychology and adjectives from the medical domain are forced together in an apparently 'natural' way. Fowler & Kress (1979, p. 32) observe that the collocation *untrained children* (used in the context of a set of swimming pool rules) establishes a process which the children have undergone (or in this case failed to undergo) as an attribute of the children themselves. Edelman (1977, p.110) calls attention to the use of descriptive terms specifying merit (*deserving poor, public-spirited businessman*, and so on):

> All these purport to be descriptive terms, based on observations or reliable inference from observations. Yet each one takes for granted a great deal that is controversial, unknown, or false... Their use in political discussion discourages the tentativeness and continuing critical stance towards the mental processes of the observer that are the hallmark of science.

One striking instance of this in the *South China Morning Post* corpus is the use of the terms *illegal immigrant(s)* and *illegal immigration*. In the corpus under study, *immigrant(s)* and *immigration* are in fact almost exclusively used in conjunction with the word *illegal*, possibly tending to the conclusion that immigration is by definition an illegal activity. The use of these terms also creates an impression that Hong Kong is at one and the same time a society under siege and a highly desirable place to live (evoking both threat and reassurance - twin elements of what Edelman [1977, p.4] calls the "primary political symbol" of "security"). The two main sources of

'illegal immigrants' into Hong Kong are Vietnam and the People's Republic of China. In the case of the Vietnamese, the designation attributes an intention to remain in Hong Kong that cannot be assumed. In the following extract from the *South China Morning Post* (12.6.92, p.7) a group of Vietnamese are presumed to be 'illegal immigrants' (to where is not entirely clear) before the fact:

> Overseas intelligence units based in Hong Kong are tracking another shipload of 53 ex-China Vietnamese illegal immigrants (ECVIIs) off the coast of Indonesia in the latest "human cargo" vessel making its way to Australia.

The use of the term *illegal immigrants* in relation to citizens of the People's Republic of China has the effect of further emphasising its distance from Hong Kong. In both cases, *immigrant* contrasts with *refugee*. Both terms are available within the discourse to respond to changing needs and political climates.

I use the term 'incantation' to refer to longer collocations that appear to have a certain ritualistic quality within the discourse. One of these is *the run up to 1997*

> "In the run up to 1997, many issues have to be settled between the two governments... As the run up proceeds, I don't think anyone, including Beijing and London, believes they can administer Hong Kong on the basis of their accords alone" (Henry Tang Ying-yen quoted in the *South China Morning Post*, 5.12.93, p.11)

Like *the transition*, *the run up to 1997* helps to create a solidity for a future which has yet to arrive. Moreover, it gives a name to a period of time which is continually shifting - from 'now' until 1997. An alternative term might be *the countdown to 1997*, but this phrase is rarely used, perhaps because of the negative connotations of *countdown* in comparison to *run up*. A second ritual phrase applied to an event is *the June 4, 1989, crackdown*:

> The nine CRC legislators supported the model after the June 4, 1989, crackdown. Yesterday, the 20-strong centre said smooth transition and convergence was more important and decided to move an amendment against the motion. (*South China Morning Post*, 12.6.92, p.7)

The June 4, 1989, crackdown refers to the events in Tiananmen Square in which student demonstrations were violently suppressed by military force. The use of the term *crackdown* is one that appears to have become standard after some debate in the media about what these events should be called (one alternative being *massacre*).

Intertextuality refers to the ways in which texts are based upon and refer to other texts or 'stories'. It is applied here to refer to the insertion of imagery from textual sources into the vocabulary itself. A number of images in common Hong Kong usage are drawn from references to classical Chinese literature (*the four little dragons*, for example, referring to the booming capitalist economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea). Here I will call attention to imagery from three more recent sources:

> In return there dangles what British and Hongkong officials have always regarded as a great prize - a through train, under which legislators elected in 1995 can stay on till 1999, despite the change of sovereignty. (*Sunday Morning Post*, 31.5.92, p.9)

The image of the *through train* is drawn from the name of the train which allows passengers to travel from Hong Kong to Guangzhou and vice versa without disembarking at the Hong Kong - China border. This is apparently an official name appearing, for example, on signs at Kowloon railway station. In the political sphere the principle of a *through train* for officials elected in 1995 has become a contentious issue in the light of proposed electoral reforms. While the image of continuity works independently of its specific reference, its intertextual reference to a major symbol of Hong Kong - China co-operation is important in that it forces a link between two events

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

in the political sphere (the opening of the railway and the 1995 elections) which might not otherwise be apparent.

An image that has become increasingly important as China has begun to take a more active role in Hong Kong politics through its advisory bodies is that of the *second kitchen* or *second stove*:

> China also began to set up what it called its second stove, the Preliminary Working Committee (PWC), widely seen as a future alternative power centre to the Hong Kong Government. The description was rejected by China. (*South China Morning Post*, 17.1.94, 'Hong Kong Annual Review', p.6)

The *second stove* contains an reference to Chinese stories in which a second wife arrives in a household and establishes a rival stove or kitchen to that of the first wife. The image is one of domestic disharmony which, although its coinage is attributed to Chinese government officials, has been maintained by the Hong Kong English media. The media frequently offer alternative versions of the PWC. The *South China Morning Post* (3.5.94, p.1), reporting on a meeting of the PWC in Hong Kong attended by its secretary-general Lu Ping, describes it as "the organisation charged with speeding up preparations for Beijing's takeover of Hong Kong." But in the same article it is noted that "people within and outside the British administration have voiced their concern that it would appear to be China's power base in the territory." The *second stove* provides a compact image for the second of these interpretations, one which, moreover, succeeds in distancing the British administration from what is portrayed as a domestic, Chinese squabble.

The third image I want to discuss is that of the *kowtow*:

> Two issues are at stake: can Hong Kong alone decide what films to screen; and has the Urban Services Department (USD) kowtowed to Beijing and exercised self-censorship in its selection of movies? (*South China Morning Post*, 21.3.94, p.17)

Kowtow refers to a bowing procedure (touching the head to the ground nine times) used as a mark of respect to higher officials in imperial China. A specific reference is also made to the story of the first British mission to the imperial court at Peking in 1793, which was turned away because of Lord McArtney's refusal to kowtow to the Emperor. A more recent connection can be made with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's famous statement that Britain would not "kowtow to Beijing," a connection which links the image to the element in official discourse which asserts that Britain is 'determined to stand up for Hong Kong'. The citation above refers to the possibility that the USD may have declined to screen Chinese films that are banned in China for fear of offending Chinese authorities. Through the *kowtow* image, however, assertion of 'freedom of expression' becomes linked intertextually to the story of British colonialism. This single vocabulary item, therefore, helps to minimise the role of Britain as colonial power in Hong Kong, and rewrite its history as a challenge to the imperial 'arrogance' of China.

Dissociation strategies refer to a number of textual devices (such as quotation marks, italicisation or the phrase *so-called*) that can be used to dissociate a writer from his or her text. In the Hong Kong context, dissociation appears to contribute to the lexicalisation of certain items. This is particularly true of items characterising China, its people and policies, which acquire a value in establishing discursive distance between Hong Kong and China. Here I will refer to three aspects of dissociation.

The use of quotation marks to enclose concepts which are seen to belong in some special way to China is a common device:

> "One country, two systems" was Deng Xiaoping's vision - a goal which Hong Kong and Britain could readily share. (Chris Patten writing in the *South China Morning Post*, 14.1.94, p.21)

Here Chris Patten raises a concept which is Chinese both in its origin and in its formulation. In spite of the overt acceptance of the principle that China and Hong Kong should be a single country with two social and economic systems, the quotation marks and the preservation of the Chinese syntax suggest a certain ambivalence. The value of the term is not simply in the concept that it expresses, but in its assertion that this is a concept which China has initiated and to which China itself should adhere.

Distancing is especially evident in newspaper reporting of political affairs in China itself. This is realised through the use of highly stylised and often obscure vocabulary:

> Alone of the so-called Eight Immortals who run China behind the scenes, Mr Li, who was state president from 1983 to 1988, had refused to even give lip service to the "new wave of reform" unleashed by the patriarch in southern China early this year. (*South China Morning Post*, 23.6.92, p.1)

In this extract the words *Eight Immortals*, *"new wave of reform"* and *the patriarch* [Deng Xiaoping] contribute to the sense of dramatic unreality conveyed by the reporting style. This style is one which has a long history in the enthusiastic acceptance of word-for-word translations of Chinese slogans and names (*let a hundred flowers bloom*, *the great leap forward*, *the cultural revolution*) into the vocabulary of Western discourses on China.

Lastly, I will give one example of a process of word-play by no means uncommon in the Hong Kong English-medium press. This consists in taking a term from the political sphere and playing with it in the context of a lighter piece. The following extract reports on incoming Chief Secretary Anson Chan's problems in moving into the official residence previously occupied by David Ford. The piece hinges on the fact that Anson Chan is the first non-expatriate to occupy this senior civil service post, and on the assumption that while 'Westerners' cook with electricity, 'Asians' prefer gas:

> Anson Chan says she will have to set up a second kitchen of her own ... [T]he new Chief Secretary was asked repeatedly just how long it would be until she moved into her new residence. "Not until at least Easter," she replied. The home's last occupant, Ford, seems to have left just too much to refurbish... The electric stove - no good to even cook a stick of choi sum - had to be replaced with a gas model that cooked, Hongkong-style, with a fast flame, she said. (*Hongkong Standard*, 21.12.93, p.1)

In this extract an entire story has been constructed around a play on the words *second kitchen*, a characterisation of the Preliminary Working Committee (see above). The ridicule of the words can be seen as a minimisation of the institution itself - a minimisation which appears to support official discourse since elsewhere (*South China Morning Post*, 3.5.94, p.1) we read that Governor Chris Patten himself has "ridiculed the committee as inconsequential". What is of interest here is that the use of a word outside its usual contexts can be taken as a sign of its lexicalisation. In this case, however, the process by which it becomes embedded in the wider vocabulary is seen to be fundamentally ideological.

Conclusion

The main objective of this paper has been to demonstrate that it is possible to discuss and account for localised vocabulary in Hong Kong's English-medium newspapers in terms of the operation of ideologies within a localised discourse. In the process, it has become evident that this vocabulary does not directly reflect or express the cultural and linguistic norms of the indigenous population of Hong Kong. On the contrary, this vocabulary is closely related to ideologies that are *colonial* in character. I have, however, focused on a narrow field within Hong Kong English,

namely political vocabulary as it is represented in English-medium newspapers and the study therefore leaves a number of questions unanswered. Are the vocabulary items discussed in this paper specific to newspapers, or are they also present in wider usage? Would similar methods of analysis be effective in analysing other discourses or genres in the English of Hong Kong? Further research into electronic corpora of 'learner English' and 'academic English' on Hong Kong issues may help to answer these questions.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that the research presented here may well fall foul of the current emphasis in critical language studies on the ways in which texts are received and interpreted by their readers. The ideological effects of the vocabulary discussed here can in no way be taken for granted. What must be made clear is that a vocabulary of colonialism does not mean that alternative views cannot be expressed. Nor should we ignore the bilingual context of Hong Kong's political discourse. What I have offered here is my own interpretation of a limited set of vocabulary items from a limited area of discourse within Hong Kong . This is not a 'correct' interpretation of the 'meaning' of words. Indeed, in terms of the type of analysis I have attempted, meaning does not adhere to words themselves, it is present only their evaluation from multiple standpoints and in multiple contexts. By offering these words up for debate, however, I do hope to challenge the illusion that their meanings are in any way transparent.

References

Belsey, C. (1980). *Critical Practice*, London: Methuen.

Benson, P. (1993). Localised vocabulary in Hong Kong English and Australian English. In R. Pemberton and Elza S.C. Tsang (eds.) *Studies in Lexis: Proceedings from a Seminar*, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, 99-111.

Benson, P. (1994). What can electronic text analysis tell us about varieties of English that we don't already know?, In L. Flowerdew & K.K. Tong (eds.) *Entering Text*, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

Berger, P.L. & Luckmann T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality*, London: Penguin.

Bolton, K. & Kwok, H. (1990). The dynamics of the Hong Kong accent: social identity and sociolinguistic description. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication 1:1*, 147-172.

Davies, S. & Roberts, E. (1990). *A Political Dictionary for Hong Kong*, Hong Kong: Macmillan.

Edelman, M. (1977). *Political Language: Words that Succeed and Policies that fail*, New York: Academic Press.

Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*, London: Longman.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*, London: Routlege and Kegan Paul.

Fowler, R. & Kress, G.R. (1979). Rules and regulations. In R. Fowler et al. (eds.) *Language and Control*, London: Routlege and Kegan Paul, 26-45.

Fowler, R., Hodge, R., Kress, G.R. & Trew, A. (1979). *Language and Control*, London: Routlege and Kegan Paul.

Kachru, B. (1986). *The Alchemy of English*, Oxford: Pergamon.

Kress, G.R. and Hodge, R. (1979). *Language as Ideology*, London: Routlege and Kegan Paul.

Leung, B.K.P. (1990a). Political development: prospects and possibilities. In B.K.P. Leung (ed.) *Social Issues in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 27-42.

Leung, B.K.P. (1990b). Power and politics: a critical analysis. In B.K.P. Leung (ed.) *Social Issues in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 13-26.

Luke K.K. & Richards, J.C. (1982). English in Hong Kong: functions and status, *English World Wide 3* 147-64.

Menz, F. (1989). Manipulation strategies in newspapers: a program for critical linguistics. In R. Wodak (ed.) *Language, Power and Ideology*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 227-249.

Mey, J. (1985). *Whose Language? A Study in Linguistic Pragmatics*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Newbrook, M. (1988). English syntax and lexis in Singapore and Hong Kong; shared features and points of difference. Unpublished paper presented at the First Hong Kong Conference on Language and Society, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Pennycook, A. (1994). *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*, London: Longman.

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic Imperialism*, Oxford University Press.

Platt, J.T. (1982). English in Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong. In R.W. Bailey & M. Görlach (eds.), *English as a World Language*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Quirk, R. (1985). The English language in a global context. In R. Quirk & H.G. Widdowson (eds.) *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the Language and Literatures*. Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, A. (1989). Hong Kong's English newspapers, *English Today 5:4* 18-24.

van Dijk, T.A. (1988). *News as Discourse*, Hillsdale, New Jersey: Erlbaum.

van Dijk, T.A. (1993). *Elite Discourse and Racism*, Newbury Park: Sage.

Wodak, R., ed. (1989). *Language, Power and Ideology*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Phil Benson teaches in the English Centre at Hong Kong University. He has taught English in Algeria, Kuwait, the Seychelles, Malaysia and Japan and joined Hong Kong University in 1991. He is currently studying for a PhD in the lexicography of Asian varieties of English at the University of Exeter.